

Andrew Jackson to Josephus Conn Guild, April 24, 1835, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

TO JOSEPH CONN GUILD.¹

Washington, April 24, 1835.

My Dear Sir, Your letter of the 11th Inst. came to hand in due course of mail, but indisposition, from which I am recovering, with the press of public business has prevented me from acknowledging it, sooner. I have read with attention your letter and duly prize and approve the principles you avow, and to *inforce* those principles you most justly remark “that it is not so important to the great Republican party, who of that party we elevate to the Presidency, as to deprive the opposition of making him for us.” It is certain that whichever party makes the President, must give direction to his administration. No chief magistrate in this country can become a Dictator. No one can carry on this Govt. without support, and the Head of it must rely for support on the party by whose suffrages he is elected, or, he must betray the expectations of those who invest him with power to obtain support from their adversaries. Your doctrine, then, that the opposition should not be allowed by the Republicans *to make a President for them*, is based on *honor*, as well as *patriotism*. With the truth and principle of a Patriot then, for your guide and the public good your end, I wish you success with all my heart.

You tell me that “every opponent of my administration is strongly in favor of Judge White”. This is what I expected. The opponents of popular rights have been invited by the Meetings nominating him to unite in his support to “*destroy the landmarks of party*”. This suits precisely the views of the ever vigilant enemies of the cause of Republicanism. Their great object now is to divide the Republican party and bring the election of President and

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vice president into Congress. There wielding the power of the Bank, the opposition are sure to succeed. Whoever is elected by them, must come *in upon terms* and be, not the President of the people, but of the politicians.

It is as true in politics as morals, that those who are not for us are against us. It is impossible to serve two masters. All, then, who lend themselves to promote the designs of the opposition, especially those who aid in dividing the Republican ranks must be considered apostates from principle. In abetting the enemy to break down those Republican Land marks, set up by Mr. Jefferson, sustained by Mr. Madison and contended for by myself, (I might say almost through blood, certainly under repeated assaults upon my person, continued threats against my life, and what is worse the constant traduction of my character consummated by an usurped attempt

1 Handwriting of Francis P. Blair, but the postscript and many corrections are by Jackson. Guild was a lawyer in Gallatin, Tenn.

of Senatorial impeachment) those who claim to be advocates of popular rights take the most effectual, indeed, the only practicable means of destroying them. I have long believed, that it was only by preserving the identity of the Republican party as embodied and characterized by the principles introduced by Mr. Jefferson that the original rights of the states and the people could be maintained as contemplated by the Constitution. I have labored to reconstruct this great Party and bring the popular power to bear with full influence upon the Government, by securing its permanent ascendancy, and when victory is grasped, when the people have already tried successfully the experiment of a national convention of delegates direct from and chosen by themselves to maintain the democratic strength unbroken and thus perpetuate their power, it is truly mortifying, to see men who have hitherto sustained me in the course I have pursued and acknowledging its rectitude, all at once turn round and endeavor to destroy by diverting a portion of the Republican strength, to the service of those who have always made war against the cause of the people, all that I have accomplished during an anxious administration of two terms.

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The daring and unprincipled Leaders north and south, who have conspired against the union and sought even the alliance of the foreign enemies of our Institutions in their eagerness to subvert them, the men who have attempted to build up a colossal monied power to corrupt and over shadow the government, springing from the will of the people, the men whose skilful intrigues once already made the Chief Magistracy a subject to be chaffered for, in the House of Reps. and who disposed of it against the public will, the men who at this moment defy the positive Instructions of their immediate constituents in various states of the union, these are the men who have called out Judge Whites sectional popularity in aid of their object, which is the overthrow of all the labors of my administration and the final subversion of Republican principles. That my old friend Judge White, should have permitted his professed friends but secret enemies to place him in this false position is a mortification to me and is one of the greatest misfortunes of his life. What strange delusion they have practised upon him, so inconsistent with good common sense is to me a subject of wonder. All his old and true friends did believe that he could not be more grossly insulted, than by the proposition, to be placed under the imputation of abandoning principle for office, or rather that remote hope of Office, held out in becoming the candidate of the piebald opposition. They will first use and then abandon him, unless he consents to abandon the system of politics he has supported through life. And he will find himself in the situation of many others, who have abandoned those principles which had acquired the confidence of the people. The people will abandon him. They are too virtuous and intelligent to be hood-winked by politicians.

That Judge White has entered into the views of the opposition, I ascribe mainly to the cunning and management of Mr. Bell. To reach the Speakers Chair Mr. Bell threw himself upon the opposition.² Their undivided strength, encreased by some *twenty* of the friends of the Administration

² See p. 512, note 1, *post*.

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whom he induced to believe, that he would remain true to the Party, gave him the election. Finding that he could not fulfill his obligations to the friends and foes of the administration, and that he must forfeit his place, because he had lost the confidence of the whole Republican majority, in consequence of his collusion with the opposition, he resolved to make the effort to recruit the numbers of that party in the House of Reps. on which he found he must ultimately depend, by producing a schism among the Republicans. With this view Judge White must have been seduced by Mr. Bell to lend his name and pretensions to cooperate with enemies of the Administration in the elections, which were to take place in Virginia, North Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi. In these states Mr. Bell supposed, that a sectional preference for Judge White, would bring into the ranks of the opposition some 20 or 30 new members, which would secure his reelection to the Chair as the candidate of the opposition. This must have been Mr. Bell's immediate object. It is not improbable, however, that he looks to ulterior objects, in building up a southern party in conjunction with Mr. Calhoun, founded exclusively on sectional feeling and prejudice, and not principle.

I perceive among other artifices employed by those late adherents of the administration, who have turned against it, that it is now pretended that my policy is sustained, by the corrupt office holders! The truth is, the people have always sustained me both against the majority of the office holders, of the politicians, and of the public presses of the country. I have long since perceived that no administration will ever command the affection of the office Holders which seeks to extirpate abuses and which acknowledges the right of the people to reach through the election of the Chief Executive, every subordinate officer, and thus to remove all who shall have given dissatisfaction to the public. The mass of the Office Holders, will allways cling to that party which would establish a life estate in office, give high salaries and exact small service. This party is the aristocracy and hence it is, that the Democratic party has, (although in the ascendancy for the greatest part of the time since the establishment of the Government) always been in the minority in the official corps. For the most part whenever a man obtains station, he adopts those

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principles calculated to make it lucrative and permanent, he grows jealous of the power of the people, which makes or seems to render his situation precarious, and imperceptibly and gradually all his feelings and political biases are surrendered to the leading men who would make Government in its great and minor officers independent altogether of the people. I consider it, therefore, an honorable testimonial for my administration, that I have been harassed by the clamor of officeholders from the beginning up to this hour.

But with these enemies in my camp and all the desertion which the seductions of the opposition can purchase I have no fear of the result. Mr. Jefferson in his most popular day would have lost the confidence of the people, if he had placed himself under the odious imputation of abandoning principle and the republican fold, for the sake of office. I would abandon my only and adopted son if he would permit himself to be placed in this attitude, and from the sentiments of my own bosom, I feel assured, that no personal or local consideration will ever vanquish the patriotic attachment felt by the great mass of the people, for the cause of the Republican party, which is indeed the cause of the Country. The late results in Connecticut, Rhode Island and Virginia must satisfy those who have sought so recently to sacrifice this cause, how imbecile are all the arts of political managers in conflict with the good sense and spirit which belongs to the american people.

I am with great respect

P.S. It has been my wish to keep out of the discussions in regard to my successor, not that I did not feel myself deeply mortified at the offensive uses which it is designed by my bitterest enemies to make of many whom, I have been in the habit of regarding as amongst my warmest friends, but because I thought that course more consistant with my official station. If there has been a departure from it I am happy to know that it has not been a matter of my seeking. Had it pleased the supporters of judge White at Nashville to leave my name out of view you may be assured it should not have been obtruded upon the public in connection with this subject. But I trust all candid men will agree with me in opinion that it was requiring an unreasonable sacrafice to my position that I should submit

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in silence to being held up to the nation by a print in my immediate neighbourhood, and professing to speak as my friend, as countenancing if not encouraging a line of conduct which, situated as I am, and holding the opinions I do, would involve me in the double crime of apostacy, and ingratitude. Having placed myself in a right position in this regard, I am still desirous of taking as little part in the matter as is consistant with justice to myself and a due regard for the public interests so far as they may depend upon the stability and success of my administration. I cannot see any objection to repeating to you, in a private letter, sentiments the subject of which have already been given to the public in self defence. If I have expressed myself strongly, it is because I deprecate strongly, the public evils which I desire to see avoided—of these sentiments I do not make a secrete, but give them freely to those who ask them as you have done. It has not been my habit to act otherwise and I am now too old to change my course, but I must require of you that this letter be kept out of the newspapers.